



M. J. "Mike" Foster, Jr.  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF LOUISIANA  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HOSPITALS



David W. Hood  
SECRETARY

July 9, 2002

Dear Family Members and Concerned Citizens:

We are pleased to announce that plans are underway to implement important changes to the ChildNet Program. You may have heard about this program, which is officially called the Louisiana Part C Program of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. It is an early intervention program for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families, with services being provided by private and public agencies.

Beginning next month, ChildNet will begin a transition from the State Department of Education (SDE) to the State Department of Health and Hospitals (DHH). Ultimately, DHH's Office of Public Health will assume responsibility for administering this early intervention program. Although this is only a change in the administration of the program, we believe the change will enable ChildNet to partner with other DHH programs that serve clients with similar needs. Ultimately, the result will be a comprehensive, coordinated, family-centered system of educational and health services for Louisiana's children and toddlers in need of early intervention.

The SDE will remain integrally involved in serving eligible infants and toddlers. Children turning three will, in many cases, need the services offered by preschool special education programs throughout the state. Local school boards will continue to offer early intervention services to children in their communities. Thus, the SDE will continue to play a major role in services to children from birth to age three.

It is expected that the full transition to the DHH could take up to a year to complete. It is our goal to make this change as smooth, seamless and transparent as possible, as our main focus is to avoid disruption of the services that the children and their families currently receive. This change must also receive the support of the U.S. Department of Education, and we will work closely with our federal partner as we develop and submit the proper planning documents.

During the next 12 months, DHH will obtain input about improvements to the system from those who are involved in providing services to young children. We will look to parents, professionals, community agencies and members of the public as we strive to build upon the proven successes of this program. DHH and the SDE, in cooperation with the State Interagency Coordinating Council, will jointly develop a plan to keep you abreast of the progress of ChildNet.

With the continued partnership between DHH and the SDE, we look forward to continued improvements in the ChildNet program. We welcome your input and ask for your support as ChildNet relocates to its new home at the Department of Health and Hospitals.

Sincerely,

David W. Hood, Secretary  
State Department of Health and Hospitals

Cecil J. Ricard  
State Superintendent  
State Department of Education

DWH:CJP:blg